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THE CHARGE

AND

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED ON OCCASION OF THE INDUCTION OF

REV. W. G. T. SHEDD, D.D.,

AS PROFESSOR OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE IN THE UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, NEW YORK,

JANUARY 11, 1864.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

THE Inauguration of the Rev. W. G. T. SHEDD, D.D., into the Chair of "Biblical Literature," in the Union Theological Seminary, took place in the Madison Square Church, on Monday evening, Jan. 11, 1864. CHARLES BUTLER, Esq., Vice-President of the Board of Directors, presided on the occasion, and put the constitutional questions to the Professor elect. The services were opened with prayer by the Rev. Dr. PRENTISS. After the Induction of Professor SHEDD, the following Charge was delivered in behalf of the Directors by the Rev. WILLIAM ADAMS, D.D., of New York.

UNION SEM. 5-8-57

CHARGE;

By REV. WILLIAM ADAMS, D.D.

The services of this occasion invite general congratulation. The Directors and patrons of the Union Theological Seminary congratulate themselves and the cause of sacred letters on a new accession to its teaching Faculty. May we not also extend our fraternal congratulations to him now inducted into a Professorship associated with nothing but high and calm and holy studies? It is an honor to belong to the "Commonwealth of Scholars" in any of its departments; but theirs is a peculiar dignity and delight who are permitted to give the whole of life to the study of that Word, which communicates in human languages the mind of God to the world. Not to mention those still living engaged in this service, memory recalls many whose names, influence and honors are fresh and fragrant, whom our country and the world "will not willingly let die:" your immediate predecessor, Edward Robinson, on whose

tomb the cypress wreath has scarcely withered, whose fame belongs to both Continents; his instructor and ours, Moses Stuart, *clarum et venerabile nomen*, the father of Biblical Literature in its modern revival in our land; Addison Alexander; and that rare specimen of Christian scholarship, whose holy enthusiasm and honest thoroughness in all good and generous knowledge were equalled only by his unaffected modesty, Bela B. Edwards. There is only one sense in which such men can be said to die. Their forms, their voices pass out of the reach of our senses, as the stars by day; but their books, their instructions, their noble emulation still live, speaking to us and helping us, even as the same stars, invisible but not extinct, exert their constant attraction upon the earth.

It is also an occasion for congratulation that the present auspices of Biblical scholarship are so far in advance of former times. We neither forget nor disparage the labors of our ancestors. We recall, with special honor, the prodigies of Biblical learning who lived in the seventeenth century—Walton, Lightfoot, Usher, Castell, Selden, Poole, and Pocock. The early ministers of New England were the contemporaries and associates of these distinguished scholars at the English Universities, and shared their zeal and proficiency in Oriental studies. Several of the Semitic languages were included in the course of study in Harvard College from its very origin. Sewall, the Hancock Professor at Harvard,

was the author of a Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon, the correspondent of Kennicott, and his Greek Odes attracted no little attention in Great Britain. These studies afterward passed into general desuetude during the reign of metaphysical theology, under the leadership of Butler and Edwards. After all that has been done in and by the past, it will not be disputed that at no time in the history of the world were there so many facilities and inducements for a thorough knowledge of the original Scriptures, and all cognate sciences, as the present. Observe the number who have addicted themselves to these studies, and the results of these studies in Lexical and Grammatical authorities. Fifty years ago, how meagre the helps of a student in Hebrew or Hebrew-Greek! What an interval between Buxtorf, Schleusner and Parkhurst; and Passow, Wahl, Winer, and Gesenius. The number of Hebrew and Greek Lexicons, with significations rendered in German and English, instead of Latin, as was the previous method, is an indication of the increased numbers who use them in their respective countries. In the celebrated correspondence of Hon. Charles Fox with Gilbert Wakefield, at the beginning of the present century, when the latter had projected a Greek and English Lexicon, the former, with many wishes for its success, expressed the doubt [whether there were persons enough speaking the English language to justify such an undertaking; the use of the Latin, the common language of scholars in all countries, insuring a wider

circulation and sale than if limited to any one of the modern languages. Not to speak of the comprehensive Lexicons of Planche, Schneider, Pickering, Liddell and Scott, more copies of Robinson's "Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament" were sold, in its first edition, than Mr. Fox believed, in the year 1800 could be disposed of among all English readers of the Greek throughout the world. As to the expediency of continuing the use of Latin in lexicography and classical criticism,* or deciding which language should have the precedency in the order of the study,† the Latin or Greek, these are points which it would be impertinent to discuss on this occasion; but the fact that there are now so many Hebrew and Greek Lexicons in our modern vernacular tongues, is a proof of the increasing numbers who are addicted to the study of these immortal languages.

Though it would be a very meagre induction of what belongs to the Professorship of Biblical Literature, to confine its range to the pedagogic teaching of Greek and Hebrew syntax, yet it having pleased God to make use of these languages for the purposes of one complete revelation, it is instructive to observe how they were prepared, by special arrangements, for this honored service. Never let it be forgotten that Christianity, in all stages of its dis-

* Vid. the Preface of the "Port Royal Grammar" for a discussion of this subject, in 1676.

† Vid. Wyttenbach, vol. 1, p. 550.

closures, is a religion of facts. The process by which the documents containing the record of this history have been transmitted to us, and proved to be genuine, is familiar to all well-informed persons. But it is of interest to notice that this history is woven into the very languages chosen to be the vehicles of divine revelation. The purpose of God in the first ages, we are informed, was to seclude one people to be the depositaries of the true religion. That people had a language which favored the intention. It kept itself free from foreign corruptions. When that people dwelt in Egypt, where, we are told, they lived apart, the evidence of that separation is in the very language which they bring back with them,—the simple, uncorrupted language of their fathers. Their national and ecclesiastical polity culminated in the days of David and Solomon; at the same time was it that their language flourished most gloriously in those Psalms and manifold poems, which are still preserved as the crown jewels of the church and kingdom of our Lord. But when it suited the purpose of God that this Hebrew isolation, having subserved its use, should cease, and the nation was sent into captivity, emptied from one vessel into another, that very fact is wrought into their language. The later books of the Old Testament show the effect which had been produced on the Hebrew tongue by this connection with foreign nations. The book of Daniel is essentially Chaldaic. Not to speak of the square characters in which the later Hebrew

was written,—derived from the Chaldeans,—the historic residence of the Hebrews among that people for the greater part of a century, is attested by the language in which their annals are written; and at length, when the Hebrew nationality and polity were to be merged into a new economy, one universal religion,—Christianity for all the nations,—that fact is patent in the relations of the Hebrew tongue to the Greek, forming a new combination, and in the extraordinary manner in which the Greek was prepared, modified, and used for this distinctive agency. Not only was Greek the language of international intercourse, acquiring this universality in a long series of events, but it had itself passed through several modifications which had fitted it for the special use by which it was to be immortalized in connection with the one revealed religion of the world. No one at all acquainted with the Greek classics has failed to observe the difference between their style and the Greek of the New Testament. The peculiarity of the former is the artistic construction of its sentences,—intricate, complex, involved, like an ivory cabinet, till the discovery of its nominative gives you the key for unlocking the mechanism, and admiring the ingenuity and beauty of its rhetoric. Language constructed on such a principle, like any other work of art, a picture by Zeuxis, a piece of statuary by Appelles, is an object of admiration, but altogether unsuited to the purposes of a universal revelation. Nevertheless, by all

these elaborate processes, the Greek language was wrought into most wonderful ductility, precision, and perspicuity, making it capable of conveying the nicest shades of thought, the most exact philosophical distinctions.*

Look now at the Greek of the New Testament. It is not the artistic Greek of the schools. It is not the stately language of Plato and Aristophanes, reminding you of the tessellated courts of kings. But it is this expressive, ductile, clean-cut, and beautiful language, as it was acquired by men of the Hebrew stock, who infused into it certain qualities of their own vernacular, forming, by the new combination, a language to the last degree suited to be translated easily and correctly into all other languages spoken among men. Nothing in the Evangelists is involved. There are no long and intricate sentences. The Greek of the New Testament, it has often been said, is more easy to be read than that of any other book. The reason is, that thoughts and words are presented in their natural order—the Hebrew method, the subject foremost,—just as children talk,—in distinction from the studied modes of rhetoric art. There were more reasons than one why the Evangelists were chosen from an uneducated class. Probably it may not have occurred to themselves, when dictating or writing their immortal annals, that in using the language which, by arms, and schools, and

* "The finest ever spoken by mortals."—Sir Wm. Jones, Preface to Isæus.

commerce, had acquired more extension than any other, they were using it in such a simple, childlike, and unartistic manner, that it was inimitably adapted to polyglottic translations. With the probable exception of Luke, the Apostle Paul was the only one of the New Testament writers who had a scholastic education. His was a peculiar office, to arrange in a more scientific form the doctrines of the Christian system, as based upon the facts recorded by the Evangelists. His speech before the Academicians at Athens, as recorded in the seventeenth chapter of Acts, the Greek of which, suited to his peculiar audience, more closely resembles the Attic style than any other passage in the New Testament, and the masterly method of the Epistles to the Romans and the Hebrews, in which, by the infusion of Hebraistic ideas, the Greek is made to bear a new sense, unknown to its classic academies, these are only additional evidences of the extraordinary manner in which the great Apostle, a Hebrew by birth and religion, yet educated in the art of mental management, and the vernacular use of the Greek language at the University of that Greek city in which he was born, was qualified for his peculiar service as a propagandist of the one universal religion of our species.

So many are the topics suggested by this occasion, that I perceive the danger of transgressing upon the proprieties of the hour. In performing the service assigned me by the Directors of the Seminary, decorum requires that the amplest time should be

allotted to him just inaugurated into his office, for the utterance of his own thoughts and intentions. I hasten, therefore, to express the wishes of those through whom he has received his appointment, in reference to the discharge of his official duties. First of all, we charge you to revere, honor, and by every method exalt the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the one, only written revelation of God. This volume, in this regard, has no predecessor, equal, or successor. Inspired by its Author, it is the standard of ultimate appeal in all matters of belief and practice. As this revelation is communicated in certain languages, chosen and prepared for the purpose, you are to be thoroughly acquainted with those languages, and require a similar knowledge of all resorting to your instructions.

Christian Theology has for its basis a correct interpretation of inspired language. "*Theologus in Scripturis nascitur*," is the incontrovertible aphorism of our profession. The department of Biblical Literature supplies the foundation and the material for the edifice reared by the theologian. This material is to be collected by the rigid honesty of syntax and exegesis. Though your previous studies in the department of dogmatic theology and doctrinal history will be of immense advantage to you in your present office, yet it has already occurred to you that, as an exegete, you must hold in abeyance all which ancient and modern teachers have held concerning specific doctrines, while you are engaged in the endeavor to

ascertain the simple meaning of the original text. That meaning well defined according to the proper construction of words, the way is prepared for the systematizing of doctrines, for defending and illustrating them by history, philosophy, and varied learning. In its proper place and connection, nothing can be more serviceable than an intimate acquaintance with the history of opinions. Had the researches of older scholars, particularly of Hengstenberg, as to the Pentateuch, been familiar to the Bishop of Natal, he would have recognized his recent objections among the *spolia opima* long ago hung up in the depository of historic Christianity. The Old and the New Testaments are organically united. They are not attached by artificial ligatures. An assault on the Pentateuch is a blow at the Evangelists. De Wette was right when he openly declared that the mythical interpretation applied to the books of Moses, must also be employed with reference to the New Testament. Strauss's "Life of Jesus" is a logical correspondency to the Hebrew Mythology of Bauer. The method, which some have adopted in regard to the Exodus and the passage of the Red Sea, applied to the Gospels, would annul the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Special importance is attached to this direction concerning the authority of the Inspired Volume, because of the peculiar character of that period of time and thought through which we are now passing. This is not the age of Polemics, as in the formative period of the Christian

history; nor of Scholasticism, when philosophy sought to systematize truth after its own methods; nor yet of Symbolism, as when political and ecclesiastical forces strove to adjust conflicting confessions; ours is the age of Criticism, when Naturalism asserts its own construction of the facts which, as we believe, lie at the basis of our religion. With no sympathy with the ill-advised zeal of those who would interdict science through fear of its antagonism to faith; holding, on the other hand, that the legitimate deductions of one science are not to be overruled by sideling inferences from another,—than which nothing can be more impertinent and unphilosophical,* you will address yourself to your own noble and independent science—for if anything deserves to be so called, it is the canons of criticism,—exulting in the confident belief that the result of all knowledge will be to harmonize the facts of nature and supernaturalism, to confirm and not to disturb faith in the divine origin of Revelation, so that Science and Religion, hand in hand, may bend at the same altars, and find their last induction, their common inspiration in Biblical Christianity.

To specify the hermeneutic rules by which you will be guided in your work, would be to write a volume like that of Morus or Ernesti, rather than a brief address. Permit me to mention one which is comprehensive and paramount. In the interpretation

* Vid. "Spiritual Christianity," by Isaac Taylor, p. 25.

of a book containing such a variety of style and method,—historic, poetic, didactic, symbolic, preceptive, prophetic, and epistolary,—some guides there must be helping one to the true sense of what is formally so diversified. Especially when it is admitted that in the New Testament the Greek language is made the vehicle of ideas which it never conveyed before, some aid there must be which is more than that of lexicons and grammars. When we have emphasized the prerequisite of a sound judgment, familiarly known as common sense, in distinction from all mystic and mythical methods, let us remember that there is a spiritual discernment, which is more than erudition, and which God has promised even unto babes. The true interpretation of Scripture must be that which the Author of the Scriptures puts upon his own words, and which he communicates to him who seeks it with filial prayer. This "quick understanding" is a temper rather than a faculty. It is like *antennæ* to the mind, a sensitive power by which it feels its way easily and promptly through passages manifold and labyrinthine, where pride and self-confidence grope and stumble. That the interpreter of the Bible should be in personal sympathy with the Bible, would seem to be the first and indispensable qualification of an exegete. His office is not to create, but to receive. The giant Polyphemus was blind. It matters essentially through what door, by what experience, with what intent a scholar makes his entrance into the Christian temple.

Clemens Alexandrinus, Grotius, Erasmus, Parr,* De Wette, were learned far above the majority of men; but many of their inferiors in letters and science, but of larger proficiency in the sympathies of Christ's kingdom, have caught the meaning of the New Testament *Ἀναναίνωσις*, *Ἱλαστήριον*, *Δικαιοσυνη*, and *Πίστις* as by a direct discernment of the Spirit.† It will not be necessary to multiply words on a topic concerning which the Directors and Teachers of this Seminary are so entirely agreed. This Institution was consecrated to piety and prayer as well as learning. Too much of true science, of solid learning, there cannot be. There may be too little of that spiritual devo-

* The "Practical Christianity" of Wilberforce was entirely misapprehended by the learned Grecian who assaulted it as with a catapult.

† Great interest attaches to the following extract from Bishop Horsley. A proficient in science, the Editor of the Works of Sir Isaac Newton, of Castilian stateliness, this distinguished prelate was never suspected of any sympathy either with ignorance or enthusiasm. "I will not scruple to assert that the most illiterate Christian, if he can but read his English Bible, and will take the pains to read it in this manner,—by a collation, diligent and *prayerful*, of its parallel passages,—will not only attain all that practical knowledge which is necessary to his salvation, but, by God's blessing, he will become *learned in everything relating to his religion* in such degree, that he will not be liable to be misled, either by the refined arguments or the false assertions of those who endeavor to ingraft their own opinions upon the oracles of God. He may safely be ignorant of all philosophy, except what is to be learned from the sacred books; which, indeed, contain the highest philosophy adapted to the lowest apprehensions. He may safely remain ignorant of all history, except so much of the history of the first ages of the Jewish and of the Christian church, as is to be gathered from the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments. Let him study these in the manner I recommend, and *let him never cease to pray for the illumination of that Spirit by which these books were dictated*, and the whole compass of abstruse philosophy and recondite history, shall furnish no argument with which the perverse will of man shall be able to shake this learned Christian's faith."—*Sermons on the Resurrection*, pp. 165, 166.

tion which is both light and life. Pious affections are wondrous helps to that intellection which "knoweth all things." The learned and pious Spener, pursuing his Biblical study far into the night, was seen by one of his family, himself unseen, as the scholar closed his book, reverently to lift his cap from his head, and ejaculate as the pith of his devotions, "Blessed Jesus, thou and I will never be separated." Charging you to be in constant communion with Him whose name defines the science you are to teach, it is instructive to notice that saintship and scholarship have the same point of perspective. While the wise men and noble of antiquity, made familiar to us in our classical reading, are more and more disconnected from all our personal interests, receding continually into the mists and obscurities of a legendary past, He, the Living Christ, is drawing nearer to us every day, the outlines of his person becoming more distinct to the eye, the central life of all history, the radiant focus of all truth, the unity of all sciences, the end and value of all pursuits, the sum of all things, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

May God enable you, my dear brother, so to prosper in this "high calling" as a teacher of divine truth, that a long succession of faithful men, educated by your wisdom, animated by your example, shall remember you with gratitude as they shall translate, interpret, and teach the Bible to their fellow men all over the earth.

BIBLICAL EXEGESIS: ITS INFLUENCE UPON THE THEOLOGIAN AND PREACHER.

AN

INAUGURAL ADDRESS,

By REV. WILLIAM G. T. SHEDD, D.D.

The opening of one of the most sagacious and suggestive of modern treatises in philosophy reads as follows: "Man, as the minister and interpreter of nature, does and understands as much as his observations on the order of nature, either with regard to matter or to mind, permit him, and neither knows nor is capable of more."* In this dictum of Lord Bacon, which he lays down as the corner stone of his philosophical system, reflecting and speculating man is represented to be an interpreter. The function of the philosopher is not to originate truth, but to explain it. He is to stand up before a universe of matter, and a universe of mind, and his office is to interrogate them, and hear what they say. He is not to attempt an exertion of his own power upon them in order to reconstruct them, and thereby put a meaning into them. He is not to distort them, by injecting into them his own prejudices and preconceptions; but simply going up to them with reverence

* Bacon: Novum Organum, Aph. 1.

and with freedom, he is to take them just as they are, and to question them just as they stand, until he gets *their* answer. The spirit of a philosopher, then, according to this sagacious Englishman, is no other than the spirit of an *interpreter*. If we might employ his own proud phrase, "Francis Verulam thought" that the great aim and office of philosophy is *hermeneutical*. The result of all speculative inquiry into the world of matter and of mind, according to this wise and substantial thinker, should be an *exegesis*, an *explanation*. Under the impulse and guidance of this theory, modern science, more particularly in the sphere of material nature, has made progress. That wise and prudent interrogation of nature which has been so characteristic of the last two centuries has yielded a clear and loud response. The world of matter has replied to many of the questions that have been put to it. The stone has cried out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber has answered.

But if this is true and fruitful in philosophy, it is still more so in theology. The duty and function of the theologian is most certainly that of an interpreter, and that alone. With yet more positiveness may we adapt the phraseology of the opening sentence of the Novum Organum, and say: "Man, as the minister and interpreter of revelation, does and understands as much as his observations on the order and structure of revelation permit him, and neither knows nor is capable of more." For revelation is as much the product of the Divine intelligence, as the worlds are

the product of the Divine power. Man confessedly did not originate the world, and neither did man originate the Christian Scriptures. The ultimate authorship of each alike carries us back to the Infinite. For though in the propagation of the species, and the sustentation of animal life upon the planet, the creature oftentimes seems to have an agency analogous to that of the creator himself, yet we well know that all things in the material universe are of God ultimately; so, likewise, though in the production of those documents which make up the canon of inspiration, many individual men were employed with a freedom and spontaneousness that looks like original authorship, yet it was the infinite and all-knowing intelligence of God which is the head-spring, the *fons fontium* of it all.

The attitude, therefore, of the human mind toward revelation, should be precisely the same as toward nature. The naturalist does not attempt to mould the mountains to his patterns; and the theologian must not strive to pre-configure the Scriptures to his private opinions. The mountain is an *object*, positive, fixed, and entirely independent of the eye that looks upon it; and that mass of truth which is contained in the Christian Scriptures is also an *object*, positive, fixed, and entirely independent of the individual mind that contemplates it. The crystalline humor of the eye is confessedly passive in relation to the mountain mass that looms up before it in majesty and in glory. It receives an impression and expe-

riences a sensation, not mechanically or chemically indeed as wax melts before fire, or as an alkali effervesces under an acid, yet inevitably, and in accordance with the real and independent nature of the mountain. And the moral mind of man, in relation to the moral truth of God which is set over against it in his revelation, should in like manner be recipient, and take an impression that issues inevitably from the nature and qualities of fixed and eternal truth. Neither in the instance of the eye nor of the mind, is the function that of authorship or origination; it is that of living recipiency and acquiescence. In the presence of both nature and revelation, man, as Lord Bacon phrases it, is a minister and interpreter, and not a creator and lord.

We have naturally fallen into this train of remark, as an introduction to the subject which we propose to discuss upon the present occasion. Summoned by the guardians of this Theological Seminary to give instruction in the department of Biblical Interpretation, it is our duty to consider the office of an interpreter; to discuss the nature and influence of an exegetical talent and spirit.

The etymology of the term (ἐξηγέομαι) implies that exegesis is the leading forth into the light of a clear perception, of an idea that is shut up in human language. It supposes words,—words that are filled with thoughts that require to be conducted from behind the veil which covers them. Exegesis, there-

fore, implies a *written* word. It supposes a *written* revelation. There can be no interpretation unless thought has been vocalized and fixed in outward symbols. An unwritten revelation, confined to the individual consciousness, never projected into language and never taking a literary form, could not be an object of critical examination, and could not yield the rich fruits of analysis and contemplation. Those theorizers who combat the doctrine of a "book revelation," and contend for only an internal and subjective communication from the mind of God to the mind of man, present a theory which, if it were transferred to the sphere of human literature, would bring all intellectual investigation and stimulation to a dead stop. If all the thinking of man were confined to consciousness; if his ideas were never expressed in language, and written down in a literature that is the outstanding monument of what he has felt and thought; if within the sphere of secular thinking man were limited to his isolated individualism, and were never permitted to fix his eye and mind upon the results to which fellow minds had come; the most absolute stagnation would reign in the intellectual world. If, for illustration, we could conceive that the intellect of Newton had been able to go through those mathematical processes which are now embodied in his Principia, without expressing them in the symbols of mathematics and the propositions of human language; if we could conceive of the

Principia as held in his individual consciousness merely, and never presented in an outward form to become a κτῆμα ἐς ἀεί for all generations; it is plain that the name of Newton would not be, as it now is, one of the intellectual forces and influences of the human race. All that mass of pure science which has been the subject-matter of mathematical exegesis for two centuries, and which has been the living germ out of which, by the method of interpretation, the fine growths of modern mathematics have sprung, would have gone into eternity and invisibility with the spirit of Newton, and "left not a rack behind."

I. Biblical Interpretation, therefore, postulates a written word, and a sacred literature; and in now proceeding to notice some of the influences that issue from it, we mention, in the first place, the *originality* which it imparts to religious thinking and discourse. We shall maintain the position, that the theologian and the preacher, both alike, are quickened by the analytical study of the sacred volume into a freedom, freshness, and force, that are utterly beyond their reach without it.

Originality is a term often employed, rarely defined, and very often misunderstood. It is frequently supposed to be equivalent to the creation of truth. An original mind, it is vulgarly imagined, is one that gives expression to ideas and truths that were never heard of before,—ideas and truths "of which the human mind never had even an intimation or presenti-

ment, and which come into it by a mortal leap, abrupt and startling, without antecedents and without premonitions." But no such originality as this is possible to a finite intelligence. Such aboriginality as this is the prerogative of the Creator alone, and the results of it are a *revelation*, in the technical and strict sense of the term. Only God can create *de nihilo*, and only God can make a communication of truth that is absolutely new. Originality in man is always relative, and never absolute. Select, for illustration, an original thinker within the province of philosophy,—select the contemplative, the profound, the ever fresh and living Plato. Thoughtfully peruse his weighty and his musical periods, and ask yourself whether all this wisdom is the sheer make of his intellectual energy, or whether it is not rather an emanation and efflux from a mental *constitution* which is as much yours as his. He did not absolutely originate these first truths of ethics, these necessary forms of logic, these fixed principles of physics. They were inlaid in his rational structure by a higher author, and by an absolute authorship; and his originality consists solely in their exegesis and interpretation. And this is the reason that on listening to his words, we do not seem to be hearing tones that are wholly unknown and wholly unheard of. We find an answering voice to them in our own mental and moral constitution. In no contemptuous but in a reverential and firm tone, every thinking person, even

in the presence of the great thinkers of the race, may employ the language of Job, in reference to self-evident truths and propositions: "Lo, mine eye hath seen all this, mine ear hath heard and understood it. What ye know, the same do I know also; I am not inferior unto you."* And these great thinkers themselves are the first to acknowledge this. Upon the fact of a community in reason, a partnership in the common ideas of humanity, Plato himself founded his famous argument for the pre-existence of the soul. The very fact that every human creature recognizes the first truths of science and of morals as no strange and surprising dogmas, but native and familiar, would imply in his judgment an earlier world, a golden time, when their acquaintance was made under brighter skies, and under happier omens, than here and now.

Originality, then, within the sphere of a creature and in reference to a finite intelligence, consists in the power of interpretation. In its last analysis it is *exegesis*,—the pure and accurate exposition of an idea or a truth already existing, already communicated, and already possessed. Plato interprets his own rational intelligence; but he was not the author of that intelligence. He expounds his own mental and moral ideas; but those ideas are the handiwork of God. They are no more his than ours. We find what he found, no more and no less, if he has been a truthful

* Job xii. 12.

exegete. The process, in his instance and that of his reader, is simply that of education and elicitation. There has been no creation, but only a development; no absolute authorship, but only an explication. And yet how fresh and original has been the mental process! The same substantially in Plato and in the thousands of his scholars; and yet in every single instance there has been all the enthusiasm, all the stimulation, all the ebullient flow of life and feeling that attends the discovery of a new continent or a new star.

> "Then feels he like some watcher of the skies
> When a new planet swims into his ken;
> Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes
> He stared at the Pacific, and all his men
> Looked at each other with a wild surmise,
> Silent, upon a peak in Darien."

Originality in man, then, is not the power of making a communication of truth, but of apprehending one. Two great communications have been made to him,—the one in the book of nature and the other in the book of revelation. If the truth has been conveyed through the mental and moral structure, if it has been wrought by the creative hand into the fabric of human nature, then he is the most original thinker who is most successful in reading it just as it reads, and expounding it just as it stands. If the truth has been communicated by miracle, by incarnation, and by the Holy Ghost; if it has been im-

parted by special inspiration, and lies before him an objective and written revelation; then he is the original thinker who is most successful in its interpretation,—who is most accurate in analyzing its living elements, and is most genial and cordial in receiving them into his own mental and moral being.

These observations find their enforcement and illustration, the instant we apply them to the Christian Scriptures and their interpretation. We have already noticed that, in respect to the problems of religion, man can originate nothing, but must take what he finds given to him from the skies. Even if revealed religion be rejected, man does not escape from the authority of fixed truth, unless he adopt atheism and an absolute licentiousness of thought and action. The doctrines of natural religion are a Divine communication, as really as those of revealed. They are as immutable in their nature, and as independent of man's will and prejudices as those of Christianity itself. When we wake up to moral consciousness, and begin to reflect upon the principles of ethics that are wrought into our moral constitution, we discover that we are already under their domination and righteous despotism. We have no option. Neither can we alter them; we cannot make a hair of them white or black. We are compelled to take them exactly as they are given. We must be passive and submissive to what Cudworth denominates the "immutable morality" which antedates all finite existence, and

which was in the beginning with God. And so likewise when we pass from the problems of natural religion to those of revealed; when we pass from the question concerning human duty to the awful question concerning human salvation, we discover that the principles upon which this salvation reposes, and the methods by which it is to be accomplished, are settled in the heavens. What is written is written, and man the sinner, like man the moralist, must be recipient and submissive to the communication that is made. For the promises of Christianity are more entirely dependent upon the Divine option and volition, than are the principles of ethics and natural religion. The Deity is necessitated to punish sin, but is under no necessity of pardoning it. When, therefore, the human mind passes from ethics to evangelism, it is still more closely shut up to the record which God has given. If it must take morality just as it is communicated in reason and conscience, it must most certainly take mercy on the terms upon which it is offered in the written word; because these terms depend solely upon the will and decision of the pardoning power.

In this wise and docile recipiency of that which is fixed and eternal, we find the fountain of perennial youth and freshness for the theologian and the preacher. For by it he is placed in vital relations to all that universe of truth which is contained in the Christian Scriptures. Think for a moment of their contents. Bring to mind the ideas and doctrines

which hang like a constellation in these heavens. Think of the revelation made in them concerning the trinal unity of God, that infinite vortex of life, being, and blessedness, to which the meagre and narrow unit of deism presents such a feeble contrast. Think of the incarnation, in which all the plenitude of the divine nature blends and harmonizes with the winning helplessness and finiteness of a creature. Think of the ideas that are involved in the Biblical account of the origin of man, his fall into the abyss of moral evil, and his recovery to innocence, to holiness, and to glory. Think of the kingdom of God, an idea wholly foreign to the best of the natural religions of the world, with its indwelling energy of the Divine Spirit, and its continual intercourse with the invisible and the eternal. Contemplate these *new* ideas that have been lodged in the consciousness of the human race by the Scriptures of the Old and New dispensations; think of their suggestiveness, their logical connections, the new light which they flare upon the nature and destiny of man, the totally different coloring which they throw on the otherwise dark and terrible history of man on the globe; weigh this immense mass of truth and dogma in the scales of a dispassionate intelligence, and say if the mind of the theologian and the preacher will not be filled with freshness, with force, and with originality, in proportion as it absorbs it.

For, to recur to our definition of originality, the

human intellect is stirred into profound and genial action, only as it receives an impression from something greater and grander than itself. If it adopts the egotism of such a theory as that of Fichte, for example, and attempts to create from within itself, its action must be spasmodic and barren. To employ the often repeated comparison of Bacon, it is not the spider but the bee that is the truly original insect. Only as the theologian and the preacher, by a critical analysis of the Biblical words, and their connections, saturates his mind with the Biblical elements (στοιχεῖα), and feeds upon revelation as the insect feeds upon foliage until every cell and tissue is colored with its food, will he discourse with freedom, suggestiveness, and energy.

The influence of such familiarity with revelation is well illustrated by that of the great products of uninspired literature. The effect of a continual and repeated perusal of Homer in animating the mind is well known. It starts the intellect into original action. The Greek fire glows in these poems, and kindles everything it touches. Though the range of ideas in the Iliad and Odyssey is cabined, cribbed, and confined, compared with that of a Dante or a Shakspeare, whose intuition has been immensely widened by the Christian revelation under which he lived and thought; though the old epic in which the fall of Troy is sung cannot compare for a moment in breadth, depth, and vastness with the Christian epic

in which the fall of man is told, yet every scholar knows that just in proportion as he imbibes the ideas and spirit of this single pagan poem, all tameness is banished from his own ideas, and all feebleness from his language. The reader of Gibbon's autobiography will notice in the abstract which the historian gives of his readings, that day after day the appointed task of perusing so many lines of the Iliad is recorded as having been faithfully performed. And, moreover, he will observe that the study is done in the light of the Port Royal Greek Grammar; in the light of a careful investigation and mastery of the Greek verb.* Now, we venture to affirm that what there is of energy in the monotonous style of Gibbon, and what there is of originality and freshness in his naturally phlegmatic and heavy understanding, is due, in no small degree, to familiarity with the old bard of Chios. The French critic Bouchardon tells us that while reading Homer his whole frame appeared to himself to be enlarged, and all surrounding nature to be diminished to atoms. We have cited this as only one example of the impulse to original action that is started in the mind, by the simple exegesis and interpretation of one truly grand product of the human mind. Think of a similar contact with the Italian Dante, or the English Chaucer, and say whether originality is to be acquired by a dead lift, or by a genial pressure and influence.

* Gibbon: Autobiography, p. 444, et passim.

Returning now to the Christian Scriptures, we claim that they are the great and transcendent source of originality and power for the human intellect. The examples which we have cited from the range of uninspired literature fall far short of the reality, when we pass to the written revelation of God. Though grouped together in the most artless and unambitious manner; though the work of divers ages and different minds; though showing a variety and inequality that passes through the whole scale of composition, from the mere catalogue in the book of Chronicles, to the sublime ode in Isaiah or the Apocalypse; though, so far as mere artistic form and labored attempt at impression are concerned, almost careless and indifferent, nevertheless the body of literature contained in the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures has moved upon the mind of man, in his generations, as the moon has moved upon the sea. The influence has been tidal.

"Exegesis," says Niebuhr, "is the fruit of *finished* study." This is a remark which that great historian makes in his letter to a young philologist, which deserves to be perused annually by every student, secular or sacred. "Do not read the great authors of classical antiquity," he remarks, "in order to make æsthetic reflections upon them, but in order to drink in their spirit, and fill your soul with their thoughts,—in order to gain that by reading which you would have gained by reverently listening to the discourses

of great men. This is the philology which does the soul good; and learned investigations, even when we have got so far as to be able to make them, always occupy an inferior place. We must be fully masters of grammar (in the ancient sense); we must acquire every branch of antiquarian knowledge, as far as lies in our power; but even if we can make the most brilliant emendations, and explain the most difficult passages at sight, all this is nothing, and mere sleight of hand, if we do not acquire the wisdom and spiritual energy of the great men of antiquity—think and feel like them." * Precisely this is the aim and influence of Biblical philology and exegesis. The theologian and preacher, by his patient study of the written revelation, must gain that by reading which he would have gained by reverently listening to the discourses of the prophets, and apostles, and the incarnate Son of God. And this is the uniform effect of close linguistic investigation. The power of a grammarian is a *vernacular* power. Turn, for illustration, to the commentaries of some of the Greek Fathers, as Theodoret and Chrysostom, for example, and observe the close and vivid contact which is brought about between their minds and those of the sacred writers, by reason of their homebred knowledge of the Greek language. These commentators are not equal to some of the great Latin Fathers, in respect to the insight that issues from a profound

* Niebuhr: Life and Letters, pp. 426, 428.

dogmatical comprehension of Christian truth. So far as interpretation rests upon the analogy of faith and a comprehensive system, Chrysostom is inferior to Augustine. But in regard to everything that depends upon the *callida junctura verborum*, upon the subtle nexus of verbs, nouns, and particles, these exegetes who were "native and to the manor born" must ever be the resort and the guide of the Biblical student.*

Now, such an exegesis as this,—an exegesis of the Scriptures that is the result of "finished" study, and that fills the soul with the very thoughts and spiritual energy of the holy men of old who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,—is a well-spring of originality. The influence of it is strikingly illustrated by a comparison of the English pulpit of the 16th and 17th centuries, with that of the 18th. The minds of Hooker and Howe, the two great representatives of the Established and Non-Conforming churches, were thoroughly imbued with the substance and spirit of the written revelation. It was an age of belief, of profound religious convictions, of linguistic, reverent, and contemplative study of the word of God. Secular literature itself was tinctured and tinged with the supernaturalism of the Bible. The plays of Shakspeare, nay, the licentious plays of the Old English stage, are full of the

* This remark holds true of that acute Greek commentator of the 12th century, *Euthymius Zigabenus*, whom De Wette and Meyer so often quote.

awful workings of conscience. If men sinned, they suffered for it; if they committed adultery, they were burned in hell-fire therefor. This was the ethics, and this was the drama, of a period for which God was a living person, the Bible an inspired book, and the future life a solemn reality. The strong sense and healthy genius of England had not yet sophisticated itself into the denial of God's holiness, and God's revelation, and the authority of the human conscience. Men had not learned, as they have since, to rush into sin, and then adjust their creed to their passions. Look, now, into the religious thinking of Richard Hooker and John Howe, and feel the freshness and freedom that stamp them instantaneously as original minds. They differ much in style. We cannot place the involved and careless construction of Howe on an equality with the pellucid, rhythmical flow of Hooker. But both alike are profound religious thinkers; and both alike are suggestive and original authors.

But pass into the 18th century, and read the discourses of Alison and Blair. We have descended from the heights of Biblical doctrine to the level of natural religion; from the incarnation, the apostasy, the redemption, to the truth that virtue is right and vice is wrong; that man must be virtuous, and all will be well. How tame and unsuggestive are these smooth commonplaces. How destitute of any enlarging and elevating influence upon a thoughtful

mind. How low the general range of ideas. And the secret of the torpor and tameness lies in the fact, that these intellects had never worked their way into the deep mines of revelation, and found the ore in the matrix. It was an age in which Biblical exegesis had declined, and they had experienced only the more general influences of the written word. The living elements themselves, the evangelical dogmas, had never penetrated and moulded their thinking.

And as we look out into this 19th century, we see the same fact. The only originality in the church or out of it, in sacred or in secular literature, is founded in faith. We are well aware that the age is fertile, and that a rank growth of belles-lettres has sprung up during the last twenty-five years which has its root in unbelief. But it is a crop of mushrooms. There is nothing in it all that will live five hundred years. Compare this collection of poems, novels, and essays,—these slender attempts of the modern naturalism to soar with a feeble wing into the high heaven of invention,—with the unfaltering, sustained sweep of Dante, steeped in religion, and that, too, the religion of an intense supernaturalism; or of Milton, whose blood and brain were tinged through and through with Hebrew ideas and beliefs. Compare the light flutter of the current sentimentalism, with

> "the pride and ample pinion
> That the Theban eagle bear,
> Sailing with supreme dominion
> Through the azure deep of air,"

and tell us where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding.

II. But we must pass from this topic, to consider a second effect of the exegesis and apprehension of the Christian revelation,—and an effect that bears more particularly upon the office and functions of the pulpit itself. The thorough exegesis and comprehension of the written word of God, endows the human mind with *authority*.

"By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?" was a question which the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders put to Jesus Christ. If it was a natural question for them to ask of the Son of God, it is certainly a natural question for the secular and especially the unbelieving world to ask of the Christian herald. By what right does a mortal man rise upon the rostrum, and make positive statements concerning the origin of the human race, the dark mysterious beginnings of human history, the purposes and plans of the Infinite Mind, and conclude with announcing the alternatives of eternal salvation and eternal damnation? With respect to these dark and difficult problems, all men stand upon a common level, if divine revelation is thrown out of the account. Apart from the light poured upon them by a communication from the Divine Mind, Confucius and Socrates have as much right to speculate and dogmatize as you or I. By what right, then, does that

portion of the world which calls itself Christendom, undertake to inform that portion of the world which is called Heathendom, concerning God and the future life; concerning the soul, its needs, its sorrows, and its doom? What authority has the Christian man above that of the pagan man, in regard to the whole subject of religion, and who gave him this authority? Why does not Christendom, as it peers into the darkness beyond the tomb, look reverently to Mohammedanism for light? Why does Christianity insist that Mohammed shall come to the mountain; and why does the mountain refuse to go to Mohammed? As matter of fact, the entire human race is now receiving its lessons in theology and religion from only a portion of the race. In the outset, this portion which set itself up as the teachers of mankind was only a mere fragment of the sum-total, a mere handful of men in a corner of Palestine. The proportion has indeed greatly altered, during the eighteen centuries that have elapsed since the death of Christ; but the vast majority of mankind are still pagan. The pupils still immensely outnumber the teachers. By what title does a mere fraction of the equally rational and equally immortal masses that crowd this planet arrogate to itself the position of the tutor, and demand that the remaining majority take the attitude of the pupil? And, to narrow the circle, by what title does a small class of men rise up in Christian pulpits, and profess to impart instruction to the large congre-

gations of their fellows and their equals, upon the most momentous and the most mysterious of themes?

Unless Christendom possesses a superior knowledge, it has no right to instruct Heathendom; and unless the Christian clergy are endowed with the authority of a special revelation, and can bring credentials therefor, they have no right to speak to their fellow men upon the subjects of human duty and destiny. The first and indispensable requisite, consequently, in both speculative and practical theology, is *authority;* and this authority must be found in a direct and special communication from the mind of God, or it can be found nowhere. Throw the Scriptures out of the account, and the whole human race is upon a dead level. No one portion of it, no one age or generation of it, is entitled to teach another. That clear, commanding tone, without which the Christian herald has no right to speak, and without which the world will not erect its ears and hear, cannot issue from ethics and natural religion. It must be the impulse and the vibration of the Gospel. "I am not ashamed," says St. Paul, "of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God." Divine revelation, in his definition, is divine *power;* and power is at the bottom of authority. Power generally is not ashamed, and needs not to be. In an age like this, when force is worshipped, when the hero and the titan are set up as divinities, it will surely not be disputed that where there is power there need be no

hesitation or timidity; and that whoever is really possessed of it, is entitled to speak out with a commanding and an authoritative intonation. By virtue, then, and only by virtue of its possession of the living oracles of God, Christendom is entitled to sound a trumpet, and tell the world in all its centuries, and all its grades of civilization, that he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned. By virtue of his intuition and mastery of inspired ideas and doctrines, the Christian theologian and herald is entitled to attempt

> "the height of the great argument,
> Assert eternal providence,
> And justify the ways of God to men."

1. In applying this topic more particularly to the position and duties of the theologian and preacher, we remark, in the first place, that the close exegetical study of the Scriptures imparts a calm and conscious authority, *by reducing the whole body of Holy Writ to harmony.* The influence of doubt in respect to the symmetrical agreement and self-consistence of the Bible is weakening in the highest degree. No sacred orator can be bold and commanding in his tone, if he believes, or if he fears, that there are fatal contradictions and irreconcilable inconsistencies in the written revelation. It is for this reason that infidelity is now applying its utmost acuteness and ingenuity, to detect intrinsic and absolute contradictions in

the sacred records. The four Gospels, in particular, are the field of operations. If it can be shown, if it can be demonstrated, that these biographies of the God-man fatally conflict with each other, then the portraiture of that Personage who fills all history as the sun fills the hemisphere, becomes a fancy sketch, and Christianity disappears with its Founder.

Now, we are certain and confident that the careful and minute study of the Evangelists, in the light of grammar, of philology, and of history, results in the unassailable conviction of their trustworthiness. The process is one of those profound and unconscious ones which bring us to the goal before we are aware. The conviction that the four Gospels are organically connected, and constitute one living and perfect harmony, cannot be violently and quickly forced upon the mind. At first sight the objections and difficulties fill the foreground; particularly when protruded and pressed upon the notice by the busy and hostile critic. But, as when we look upon a grand painting, in which there is a great variety, and complexity, and apparent contrariety, of elements, it requires some little time for the eye to settle gradually and unconsciously into the point from which the whole shapes itself into harmony and beauty, so it requires wise delay, and the slow penetration of scholarship and meditation, to reach that centre from which all the parts of the evangelical biography arrange themselves harmoniously, and all contradiction disappears

forever. And when this centre is once reached, and the intrinsic, natural, artless harmony is once perceived, there is repose, and there is boldness, and there is authority. He who speaks of Christ out of this intuition, speaks with freedom, with enthusiasm, with love, and with power. Objections which at first seemed acute now look puerile. The piece-meal criticism, which, like the fly,* scans the edge of the plinth in the great edifice upon which it crawls, disappears under a criticism that is all-comprehending and all-surveying.

2. And similar to this, in the second place, is the influence of a clear exegesis of the dogmatic matter of revelation. This results in *a self-consistent theological system*, and this endows the mind with authority. Say what men may, it is doctrine that moves the world. He who takes no position will not sway the human intellect. Logical men, dogmatic men rule the world. Aristotle, Kant, Augustine, Calvin,—these are names that instantaneously suggest systems; and systems that are exact, solid, and maintain their place from century to century. And when the system is not a mere product of the human mind, like a scheme of philosophy or a theory of art, but is really the scheme and system of God himself imparted to his creatures, and certified to them by miracle, by

* "Why has not man a microscopic eye?
For this plain reason, man is not a fly."
POPE: Essay on Man, I. 6.

incarnation, and by the Holy Ghost,—when the body of doctrine has a celestial origin,—it endows the humble and docile recipient of it with a preternatural authority. That which is finite can never inspire and embolden the human soul like that which is infinite. The human mind is indeed a grand and noble intelligence, and we are the last to disparage or vilify its products. We look with respect and veneration upon the great names in all the literatures. We exclaim with Hamlet, "How noble in reason! in apprehension how like a god!" But when we are brought face to face with the problems of religion; when the unknown issues of this existence press heavily upon the apprehensive soul; when the vortex of eternity threatens to engulph the feeble immortal; how destitute of authority and certainty are all the utterances and communications of these heroes of human literature. When I rise into this plane of thought, and propose this class of questions, I need a voice from the open sky to assure me; I demand an authority that issues from God himself, before I can be certain and assured in my own mind, and still more before I can affirm with positiveness and power to the minds of others.

It is here that we observe the difference between the dogmatism of a philosopher, and that of a theologian; between the positiveness of the secular, and that of the Christian mind. Compare Immanuel Kant with John Calvin. No human being has been

more successful than the sage of Königsberg, in giving an exact and transparent expression to what he himself denominates "pure reason." The crystal under his chemistry acquires a second crystallization. The rational intelligence of man, as developed and expressed by him, answers to the description of wisdom in the apocryphal book of Wisdom: "She is more mobile than any motion; she penetrates and passes through all things by reason of her pureness."* But it is finite reason; it is human intelligence only. The questions that are raised, and the answers that are given, pertain to a limited province. Within this province he is clear as the sun, positive, and dogmatic of right. He knows whereof he affirms, and speaks with a corresponding authority. But when I pass these limits, and invite him to pass them, I hear another tone. The positiveness and the certainty disappear, and we are both alike left to querying and vague conjecture. What can he tell me, with confidence and certainty, concerning the interior and absolute essence of God? Does the trinal unity dawn within the hemisphere of his "pure reason?" Does he know the name of the first man? Can he describe to me the origin of that dark ground of evil which, by his own confession, inheres in every human will? Can he tell me, with authority and certainty, when the decaying body is being lowered to its resting place in the heart of the earth, that "all that

* Wisdom, vii. 24.

dust shall rise?" Does he know that there is pity in those stern and ethical heavens which shut down like brass over a guilty and terrified human conscience? The authority and dogmatic certainty of the philosopher stop at the limits of his domain; and it is here that the authority and certainty of the theologian begin. Turn to the Institutes of the man of Geneva, and observe the boldness and high certainty of that naturally cautious and careful understanding, upon these very themes which make the man of Königsberg to hesitate and waver. Read those words with which Calvin closes, as with a clarion peal, his great argument for the necessity of the Reformation, and say whence come the sublime confidence, and overcoming energy: "We know and are verily persuaded that what we preach is the eternal verity of God. It is our wish, and a very natural one, that our ministry might prove beneficial and salutary to the world; but the measure of success is for God to give, not for us to demand. If this is what we have deserved at the hands of men whom we have struggled to benefit, to be loaded with calumny, and stung with ingratitude, that men should abandon success in despair, and hurry along with the current to utter destruction, then this is my voice, (I utter words worthy of the Christian man, and let all who are willing to take their stand by this holy profession, subscribe to the response,) 'Ply your fagots.' But we warn you that even in death we shall become the conquerors; not simply because we shall find,

even through the fagots, a sure passage to that upper and better life, but because our blood will germinate like precious seed, and propagate that eternal truth of God which is now so scornfully rejected by the world."* This is the positiveness, this is the high celestial dogmatism, that is necessitated by the reception of Divine revelation. There is no option. There may be natural timidity; there may be the shrinking nature of the weeping prophet; but the instant the mind perceives that the Eternal Intelligence has originated and communicated a series of revelations; the instant the ear hears the "Thus saith the Lord," a transformation takes place, and human weakness becomes immortal strength.

We have thus considered, in a rapid manner, two principal influences and effects of the exegesis and apprehension of revealed truth. Originality and authority issue from this source, and from no other. If systematic theology is to maintain its position among the systems of earth; if it would still, and ever, keep the place which Bacon assigned to it, as "the sabbath and port of man's labors and peregrinations;" it must breathe in, and breathe out, from every pore and particle, the living afflatus of inspiration. By this breath of life it must live. If practical theology, if the utterances of the pulpit, are to be fresh, spiritual, and commanding, the sacred orator must be an exegete. Every discourse must be but the elongation of a text.

* Calvin: Necessity of the Reformation, sub fine.

And certainly there never was greater need of originality and authority within the province of religion, than now. The cultivated unbeliever is fast settling down upon the low commonplaces of ethics and natural religion, or else is on his way to the arid sands of atheism, and all the freshness of his mind is being dried up. Rejecting all mystery, which is confessedly the parent and nurse of high thinking and lofty feeling; rejecting all supernaturalism, by whcih alone God comes into quickening and personal contact with his creatures; throwing out of his creed all those truths upon which Christendom rests, and without which a Christendom is impossible, and reducing the whole *credenda* and *agenda* of man to the merest and most meagre minimum,—what can he do toward the impregnation and fertilizing of the human mind? Look at the two or three religious dogmas, starved and hunger-bitten, which are left to the human intelligence after his manipulations, and tell us if literature, and art, and philosophy, will be characterized by originality if his methods prevail. Tell us if pantheism will produce another Shakspeare; if anti-supernaturalism will produce another Milton; if a nerveless, voluptuous naturalism will produce another Dante. Unless the coming literature of England and America shall receive a fresh impulse and inspiration from the old Christian ideas which penetrated and enlivened it in the days of its glory, the future will witness the utter decline and

decay of one of the noblest literatures of the world. The age of sophistry, the age of pedants, the age of critics, the age of elegant languor, will come in, and the Anglo-Norman mind, like the Greek and the Roman before it, will give place to the bolder and more original intelligence, of a more believing and solemn race.

The same remark holds true, when we pass from the wide domain of general literature, to a particular province in it, like theology and sacred eloquence. The Christian pulpit, in this age, is in danger of losing its originality, because it is tempted to leave the written revelation, and betake itself to lower and uninspired sources of thought. Listen to those who neglect the constituent and organific ideas of Christianity,—the doctrines of sin and guilt, of grace and redemption,—and who find their themes in that range of truths which every student sees scattered over the pages of Plato and Cicero, of Antoninus and Seneca, and tell us if they are original and stirring homiletes. The doctrines of natural religion are differentiated from those of revealed, by the fact that they will not bear everlasting repetition, and constant expansion and illustration. You cannot preach year after year upon the immortality of the soul and the nature of virtue, and preserve the theme ever fresh and new. There is a limit in this direction that cannot be passed with safety. But it is not so with the distinctively Christian truths. Even the

dark, solemn theme of human corruption, expounded by one who has been instructed out of the written revelation, and the thronging, bursting consciousness of his own soul,—even this sorrowful and abstractly repellant theme, when enunciated in a genuinely Biblical manner, fascinates the natural man himself like the serpent's eye. Such a preacher is always felt to be original. Men never charge him with tameness and feebleness. And still more is this true of that other and antithetic doctrine of the divine mercy in the blood of the God-man. This string may be struck with the plectrum year after year, century after century, and its vibration is ever resonant and thrilling, yet sweet and æolian.

And certainly the age requires in its religious heralds and teachers that other characteristic of authority. If a man speak at all, he must speak as the oracles of God; he must speak oracularly and positively. For the intellectual world is now an arena of contending ideas and systems. Think you that all the dogmatism of the time is within the precincts of theology and the church? Think you that skepticism stands meek and hesitating, like the ass which Sterne describes, who seemed to invite abuse, and to say to every passer-by: "Don't kick me, but if you will you may?" No! all ideas, the false as well as the true, all systems, the heretical as well as the orthodox, are positive and assertory. It is no time, therefore, for Christianity,—the only system that has

a right to say to the world, "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not;" the only system that has a right to utter its high and authoritative, "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned;" —it is no time for that absolute and ultimate religion, in and by which this miserable and ruined race must live or have no life, to be deprecatory, and "borrow leave to be."

It is the office and duty of a professorship of Biblical Literature, to generate and nurture an exegetical spirit in the rising ministry. This, we think, states the real purpose of this part of the theological curriculum. The infusion of a genuinely Biblical temper into the mind of the theologian and preacher, is an aim high enough for the best energies of any one. The construction of Biblical doctrines themselves belongs to another department; the history of Biblical doctrines belongs to still another; and the art of putting Biblical doctrines into oratorical forms for popular impression belongs to still another. But to produce a talent and tact at expounding the very Biblical words and sentences themselves, and thereby to impart to the mind of the rising ministry a Biblical tone, and to imbue it with a Biblical spirit, this is the great and difficult, yet the noble and genial task assigned to the teacher of exegesis. And after all, it is the *spirit* of a book, the *spirit* of an author, which is of the chief importance. Pascal has left an instructive and quickening fragment upon the "geometrical

spirit." It is the spirit of demonstration,—that bent and tendency in an intellectual person which spontaneously inclines him to define accurately whatever is capable of definition, and to prove irrefragably whatever is capable of proof. Whoever possesses this spirit takes geometry with him wherever he goes. Of such a human mind,—the mind of a Pascal,—it may be said, as Plato said of the Eternal Mind, it perpetually geometrizes. And the same is true of the Biblical spirit. He who has imbibed it from the close and penetrating study of the words, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, sections of the sacred volume, puts the seal of the Eternal Spirit upon everything that he writes, and everything that he utters. The written word of God is not only filled with a distinctive spirit, but it is also dictated by an Eternal Spirit. It has a Spirit for its author, and it has a spirit as its inward characteristic. It is a wheel within a wheel; it is a sea within a sea; it is an atmosphere within an atmosphere. Spiritual in its origin, spiritual in its contents, and spiritual in all its influences and effects, well may it be the aim of the individual Christian, and of the church, to reach and acquire the *spirit* of the Scriptures. There is no danger of mysticism in such a striving; and no false spiritualism will result from it. Such an endeavor to drink in the pure essence of a merely human product might result in dreaminess of thought and feeling. The undue and constant musing of the New Platonist

upon the Platonic speculations finally destroyed all clear thinking and healthy mental action. The effect was like that of the forbidden fruit upon Adam and Eve. They

> "fancy that they feel
> Divinity within them breeding wings,
> Wherewith to scorn the earth."

But the written revelation is a marvellous combination of the divine with the human, of the spiritual with the material, of the reason with the understanding, of the heavenly with the earthly. All the antitheses are blended, and counterpoise each other, with wonderful harmony; so that no human mind will ever become exorbitant and exaggerated by an exclusive and absorbing study of it. Like the ocean, while it has its undulations, and an unfathomed swell which no human power can level, it never has mountains or valleys; it never exhibits or produces extremes.

It is to such a high office and work as this, that you have called me, Fathers and Brethren, Directors of Union Seminary. That I do not feel sufficient for this thing, I need not say. I cannot bring to this chair the accurate grammatical discipline, the solid philological learning, and the remarkable geographical knowledge of the eminent scholar whom I succeed. But I can, I trust, bring to it an ever-deepening reverence for the divine Word, a firm confidence in its infallibility, and an increasing sense of depend-

ence upon the illumination of the Divine Spirit. If these be in any Christian man and abound, they will make him that he shall neither be barren nor unfruitful. For they will stimulate him to study, to investigate, to analyze; and they will pour the clear and guiding light of heaven itself over all his studies, all his investigations, and all his analyses.

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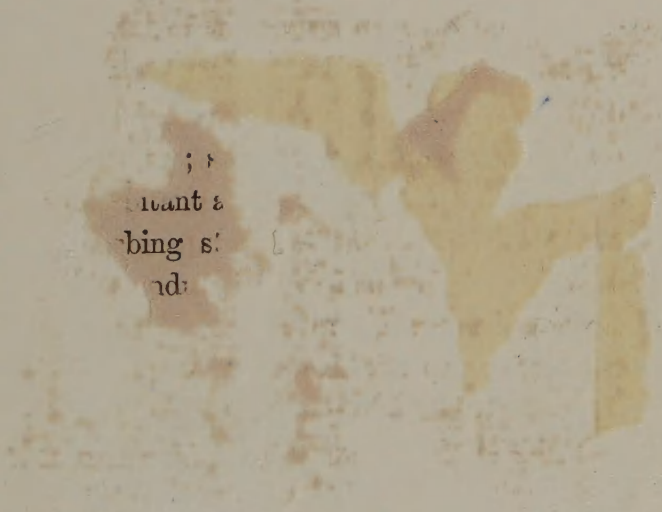

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The charge and inaugural address delivered on occasion of the induction of Rev. W.G.T. Shedd, D.D., as professor of biblical literature in the Union Theological Seminary, New York, January 11, 1864. ... 1864.
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1. Bible--Hermeneutics. I. Adams, William, 1807-1880. II. Shedd, William Greenough Thayer, 1820-1894. III. Shedd, William Greenough Thayer, 1820-1894. Biblical exegesis.

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